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HUD No. 09-238
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FOR RELEASE
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HUD CHARGES ALABAMA LANDLORD AND MANAGER WITH HOUSING DISCRIMINATION

Family forced to move because manager opposed interracial dating

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development today announced that it is charging a Marshall County, Alabama, trailer owner and rental manager with discriminating against a white family by disconnecting water service and forcing them to leave because the manager objected to interracial dating. According to the complaint, Phillip Maze, rental agent for his mother Opal Maze, told a HUD investigator, "I do not have any blacks on my property and I am aware that we have a biracial president, but no federal law will make me rent to anyone I do not want to."

The Fair Housing Act makes it unlawful to discriminate based on race or color, including making discriminatory statements, intimidating and coercing tenants, and denying them services because of the race or color of tenants' friends.

"In 2009, the actions taken here are an outrage. A landlord may not force out a family because of an objection to the race of their friends or visitors," stated John Trasviña, HUD Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. "This case demonstrates that overt acts of discrimination are not a thing of the past. HUD will not hesitate to act forcefully to protect fair housing rights."

According to HUD's charge, in response to a visit from the African-American boyfriend of one of the family members, Phillip Maze told the family they had to move out, stated that he did not believe in interracial dating, and turned off the water to the trailer. When asked what it would take to turn the water back on, Mr. Maze allegedly told the family to get rid of the black boyfriend.

The **HUD charge** will be heard by a United States Administrative Law Judge unless any party to the charge elects to have the case heard in federal district court. If an administrative law judge finds after a hearing that discrimination has occurred, he may award damages to the complainants for their damages as a result of the discrimination. The judge may also order injunctive relief and other equitable relief to deter further discrimination, as well as payment of attorney fees. In addition, the judge may impose civil penalties in order to vindicate the public interest. A federal district court judge may also award punitive damages to the complainants.

FHEO and its partners in the Fair Housing Assistance Program investigate more than 10,000 housing discrimination complaints annually. People who believe they are the victims of housing discrimination should contact HUD at 1-800-669-9777 (voice), 800-927-9275 (TTY). Additional information is available at www.hud.gov/fairhousing.

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HUD is the nation's housing agency committed to sustaining homeownership; creating affordable housing opportunities for low-income Americans; and supporting the homeless, elderly, people with disabilities and people living with AIDS. The Department also promotes economic and community development and enforces the nation's fair housing laws. More information about HUD and its programs is available on the Internet at www.hud.gov and espanol.hud.gov.

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